

## Feds sue registrar in O.C. to access records

The U.S. Department of Justice seeks details about noncitizens taken off voter rolls.

BY SALVADOR HERNANDEZ AND LAURA J. NELSON

Federal authorities sued Orange County's top elections official, alleging the county registrar violated federal law by refusing to disclose detailed information about people who were removed from the voter rolls because they were not citizens.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court, alleges that Orange County Registrar Bob Page is "concealing the unlawful registration of ineligible, non-citizen voters" by withholding sensitive personal information such as Social Security and driver's license numbers.

The 10-page lawsuit does not allege that any noncitizens voted in Orange County.

"Voting by noncitizens is a federal crime," said Harmeet Dhillon, the assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "States and counties that refuse to disclose all requested voter information are in violation of well-established federal elections laws."

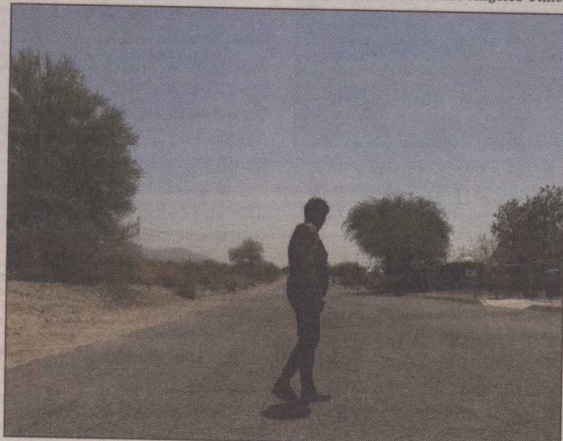
The lawsuit Wednesday stems from a June 2 letter from the Justice Department to Orange County election officials, seeking information on people who had been removed from the county's voter rolls because they weren't eligible to vote. According to the lawsuit, federal officials were acting on a complaint made by the relative of a noncitizen who received a mail-in ballot.

Over a five-year period, Orange County identified 17 noncitizens who had registered to vote, Page told the federal agency in a June 16 letter, sent in response to the June 2 request. Those people either "self-reported"

[See Noncitizens, A6]



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times



JULIE LEOPOLD For The Times

**PASTOR** Carlos Rincon, clockwise from top, and wife Amapro livestream a service. Robb Smith of Alley Cat Deliveries says some people are afraid to leave their home. Doña Chela now rarely goes anywhere.



LUKE JOHNSON Los Angeles Times

## Immigrants go dark or online

WASHINGTON — An undocumented man from Guatemala who has leukemia postponed chemotherapy because he was afraid to go to the hospital.

A Mexican grandmother packed most of her belongings into boxes, in case she is deported.

A Pentecostal church in East Los Angeles has lost nearly half of its in-person membership.

Across California and the U.S., immigrants are responding to the Trump administration's unrelenting enforcement raids by going into lockdown. Activities that were once a regular or even mundane part of life

Some access class, services, church virtually to avoid ICE. Others fear doing that too.

By Andrea Castillo and Queenie Wong

— taking kids to school, buying groceries, driving — have become daunting as immigrants who lack legal authorization grapple with how to avoid arrest and deportation.

To stay safe, some immigrants have swapped in-person activities with digital approximations. Others are simply shutting themselves away from society.

"It's a harmful form of racial profiling combined with the suspension of constitutional rights and due process. That's why many families are staying at home," said Victor Narro, a professor and project director for the UCLA Labor [See Hidden, A6]

## Troubling deployment for some

Some Guardsmen and families are agonizing over the operations in L.A., advocates say.

BY HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS AND PHI DO

Ever since President Trump seized control of the California National Guard and deployed thousands of troops to Los Angeles, calls from distressed service members and their families have been pouring in to the GI Rights Hotline.



CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times

**A MARINE** stands guard outside the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles on Monday.

Some National Guard troops and their loved ones have called to say they were agonizing over the legality of the deployment, which is being litigated in federal court, according to Steve Woolford, a resource counselor for the hotline, which provides confidential counseling for service members.

Others phoned in to say the Guard should play no part in federal immigration raids and that they worried about immigrant family members who might get swept up.

"They don't want to deport their uncle or their wife [See Troops, A7]

## Measles cases in 2025 top all of 2024

California's increase coincides with largest recent U.S. outbreak of infectious disease.

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

California has already reported more measles cases this year than in all of 2024, a worrisome development that comes as the nation is suffering its largest outbreak of the super-infectious disease in decades.

The extent of the national outbreak has rocked measles from a back-of-mind issue — one rarely, if ever, encountered by a whole generation of Americans — to a pressing public health concern.

"Measles is completely preventable," Dr. Elizabeth Hudson, regional chief of infectious diseases at Kaiser Permanente Southern California, told The Times.

The uptick in confirmed measles cases in California, while still somewhat concerning for local public health officials, pales compared with the significant outbreak that began in Texas earlier this year and has since spread to surrounding states.

Texas has reported at least 750 measles cases; New Mexico, 81; Kansas, 80; North Dakota, 28; and Montana, 23, according to the respective states' health departments. Michigan has reported 15 cases; Ohio and Illinois, 10, and Arkansas and Indiana, eight.

The virus is spreading almost universally among people who either haven't been vaccinated, or whose vaccination status is not known, authorities note. But the MMR shots, so named because they also afford protection against mumps and rubella, have long been in the crosshairs of anti-vaccine activists and skeptics — some of whom are now in charge of shaping U.S. policy regarding childhood immunizations.

There have been 17 cases [See Measles, A14]

## Justices rule Medicaid can exclude Planned Parenthood

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that states may exclude Planned Parenthood clinics from providing medical screenings and other healthcare for women on Medicaid.

The court's conservative majority cast aside the long-standing rule that said Med-

fied provider.

In a 6-3 vote, the justices ruled the Medicaid Act does not give patients an "individual right" to the provider of their choice.

The dispute turned on abortion, even though federal funds cannot be used for the procedure.

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# Immigrants go inside, online to avoid ICE Vet adv

[Hidden, from A1]  
Center.

Pastor Carlos Rincon, who leads the Pentecostal church in East Los Angeles, said about 400 people used to attend his church every week, people with roots in Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador and Honduras. Now, half as many attend and viewership of livestreamed services on Facebook and YouTube has increased. Some prayer groups meet on Zoom.

In January, the Trump administration said immigration agents were free to make arrests in sensitive locations once considered off limits, such as hospitals, schools and churches.

At Rincon's church — which he asked not be named for concern about retaliation — fear has colored life in ways large and small.

A congregant in his late 20s who has leukemia postponed his chemotherapy, afraid he could be caught and deported to Guatemala. After he decided to reschedule the treatment, church leaders agreed they will take turns staying with him at the hospital.

A half-day program to provide resources for landscapers and a music class for children were canceled this month after many said they were too afraid to attend. Rincon restarted the music class last week for those who could attend.

On Wednesday, after neighbors told him that immigration agents had been lurking around the area, he warned families against attending a regularly scheduled in-person church service.

Five miles away at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Father Ricardo Gonzalez said attendance is down at least 30%. The church doesn't livestream Mass, though he's considering it.

Gonzalez said parishioners expect him to have answers, but as an immigrant green card holder himself, he too doesn't know how to react if immigration agents show up at the church.

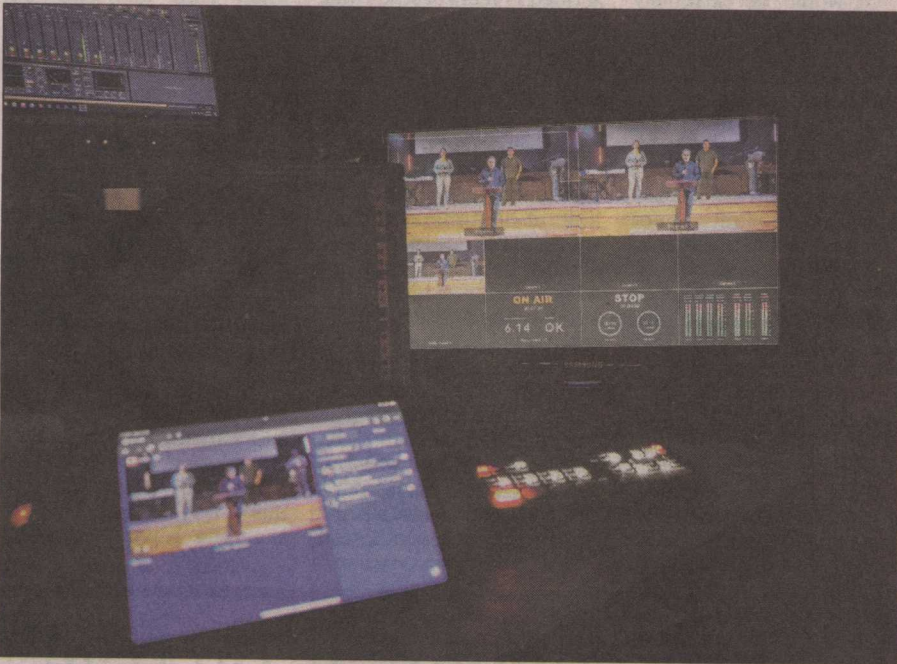
"If I get arrested, am I going to be thrown from the country?" he said. "Who is going to help me out?"

For weeks, agents have been arresting those who show up at courthouses for their immigration proceedings.

Volunteers at USC, UCLA, UC Irvine and UC Law San Francisco responded by establishing a free hotline to help people file motions to move their appointments online. The service was the idea of Olu Orange, a lawyer and USC political science and international relations professor who runs the Agents of Change Civil Rights Advocacy Initiative.



DOÑA CHELA has packed up her clothes, pots and pans, and jewelry just in case ICE agents come for her.



PASTOR Carlos Rincon now livestreams his service from his East L.A. church.

Since the hotline ([888] 462-5211) went live June 15, volunteers have responded to nearly 4,000 calls and helped more than 300 people fill out the form to move their hearings online.

On Friday, Orange answered a call from a girl who sounded about 12 years old, whose parent had been picked up by immigration agents.

"She saw this number on social media and she called and she said, 'What can I do?'" Orange said. He gave her the number for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

Luz Gallegos, executive director of TODEC Legal Center in the Inland Empire,

said the pandemic prepared some rural and elderly residents for the current reality because it taught people to use technology — "to go virtual." Now they have Wi-Fi and know how to use Zoom.

Some, though, also fear staying digitally connected.

Gallegos said many people who call TODEC's hotline say they are changing phone companies because they are afraid of being tracked by immigration agents. Others say they're swapping cellphones for pagers.

Many of the immigrants served by TODEC now leave their homes only for work, Gallegos said. They have groceries delivered or run to

the store when they think border agents are least likely to be on patrol. Before schools let out for the summer, some parents switched their children to online classes.

Some Inland Empire farmworkers now won't grab their mail from community mailboxes, Gallegos said, so TODEC has mobilized volunteers to drop off mail, give people rides and help with interpretation needs.

One person helped by the nonprofit is Doña Chela, an undocumented 66-year-old woman who asked to be identified by her nickname.

Many months ago, Doña Chela packed up her possessions after making plans

to return to her hometown in Michoacan, Mexico, for the first time since she arrived in the U.S. in 1999. But in April, her brother called to say it wasn't safe there, that cartel groups had taken over the neighborhood and were extorting residents.

Her husband, a U.S. citizen, has dementia. She thought of moving instead to a border town such as Mexicali, where she and her husband could still be near their three adult U.S.-born daughters.

But then her husband's condition began to decline, and now starting over feels too difficult. Even so, she has chosen to keep her clothes, pots and pans, and jewelry packed away — just in case.

Doña Chela doesn't leave her home except for emergencies. Her daughters bring her groceries because she has stopped driving. She no longer goes to church or makes big batches of tamales for community reunions. She barely sleeps, thinking that agents could burst through her door any time.

"I don't know what to do anymore," she said, crying. "I will wait here until they kick me out."

Her only distraction from constant anxiety is the lush garden she tends to daily, with mangoes, nopales, limes and a variety of herbs.

Gallegos, of TODEC, said the situation faced by Doña Chela and so many others bring to mind a song by Los Tigres del Norte: "La Jaula de Oro." The golden cage.

"Our community is in a golden cage," she said. "I

hope it's not too late when this country realizes they need our immigrant workforce to sustain our economy."

St. John's Community Health, one of the largest nonprofit community healthcare providers in Los Angeles County that caters to low-income and working-class residents, launched a home visitation program after it surveyed patients and found many canceling appointments "solely due to fear of being apprehended by ICE."

The clinic, which serves L.A., the Inland Empire and the Coachella Valley, said that since the immigration raids began, more than a third of all patients didn't show up or canceled their appointments.

Some of those who canceled signed up for telehealth or home visits performed by a small team of medical staff, said Jim Mangia, the clinic's chief executive. The clinic is adding another home visitation team to double the amount of visits they perform.

Community coalitions are stepping in to help immigrants who can't afford to hide. OC Rapid Response Network, for instance, raised enough funds through payment app Venmo to send 14 street vendors home.

Robb Smith, who runs Alley Cat Deliveries, said he has seen requests for grocery deliveries grow by about 25%.

He doesn't ask his customers whether they're immigrants in hiding, but there are signs that people are afraid to leave their house. One woman, who said she was making an inquiry for a friend, asked him whether he saw any ICE officers when he was picking up items at Costco.

Glen Curado, the founder and chief executive of World Harvest Food Bank in Los Angeles, said there has been a significant drop in people coming in to pick up groceries in person. Up to 100 families visit the food bank on a weekday, down from the usual high of 150, he said.

The food bank has a program, Cart With a Heart, in which people can donate \$50 toward fresh produce, protein and other staples to feed two families for a week. The donors can then take those groceries to people sheltering in place.

"It's almost like a war scene," Curado said. "You hide here. I'll go out and I'll get it for you, and I'll bring it back — that mentality."

Castillo reported from Washington and Wong from San Francisco. Times staff writer Melissa Gomez in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

[Troops, from A1] or their brother-in-law," Woolford said. "Some of the language people have used is: 'I joined to defend my country, and that's really important to me — but No. 1 is family, and this is actually a threat to my family.'"

Although active-duty troops are largely restricted from publicly commenting on their orders, veterans' advocates who are in direct contact with troops and their families say they are deeply concerned about the morale of the roughly 4,100 National Guard members and 700 U.S. Marines deployed to Los Angeles amid protests against immigration raids.

In interviews with The Times, spokespeople for six veterans' advocacy organizations said many troops were troubled by the assignment, which they viewed as overtly political and as pitting them against fellow Americans.

Advocates also said they worry about the domestic deployment's potential effects on military retention and recruitment, which recently rebounded after several years in which various branches failed to meet recruiting goals.

"What we're hearing from our families is: 'This is not what we signed up for,'" said Brandi Jones, organizing director for the Secure Families Initiative, a nonprofit that advocates for military spouses, children and veterans. "Our families are very concerned about morale."

Janessa Goldbeck, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and chief executive of the nonprofit Vet Voice Foundation, said that, among the former Marine Corps colleagues she has spoken to in recent weeks, "There's been a universal expression of, 'This is an unnecessary deployment given the operational situation.'"

"The fact that the LAPD and local elected officials repeatedly said deploying the National Guard and active-duty Marines would be escalatory or inflammatory and the president of the United States chose to ignore that and deploy them anyway puts the young men and women in uniform in an unnecessarily political position," she said.

She added that the "young men and women who raised their right hand to serve their country" did "not sign up to police their own neighbors."

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Trump has repeatedly said Los Angeles would be "burning to the ground" if he had not sent troops to help quell the protests.

"We saved Los Angeles by having the military go in," Trump told reporters last week. "And the second night was much better. The third night was nothing much. And the fourth night, nobody bothered even coming."

The troops in Los Angeles do not have the authority to arrest protesters and were deployed only to defend federal functions, property and personnel, according to the military's U.S. Northern Command.

## Justice Department sues for O.C. registrar records

[Noncitizens, from A1] that they were not citizens or were deemed ineligible by the Orange County district attorney's office, Page said.

The registrar sent the names, dates of birth and addresses of those 17 people to federal officials, but redacted some sensitive information, including Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, voter identification numbers and scans of their signatures, according to a letter from the county's lawyers.

County lawyers argued that withholding more sensitive personal information

mation about noncitizens who registered to vote.

Justin Levitt, an election law expert at Loyola Marymount University's law school and a former voting rights lawyer in the Justice Department, said the lawsuit was "a little weird," in part because government agencies frequently negotiate over sharing information and rarely go to court to do so.

The Justice Department should be able to verify whether Orange County has a process of ensuring that ineligible people are kept off the voter rolls by seeing the



not citizens.

The district attorney's office found that one person had registered to vote despite not being a citizen. That person, a Canadian citizen and legal resident, pleaded guilty in 2024 to three misdemeanor counts of casting votes in the primary and general 2016 elections. He was sentenced to one year of informal probation.

Bob Page did not return messages seeking comment about the suit. A spokesperson for the registrar's office said the county does not

## Medica

[Justices, from A1]

the court's three liberal all women, dissented.



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Curado, the founder of executive of World Food Bank in Los Angeles, said there has been a significant drop in people coming in to pick up groceries. Up to 100 families used to come to the food bank on a regular basis, down from the peak of 150, he said. The food bank has a partnership with a local grocery store. With a Heart, in partnership with the food bank, people can donate \$50 worth of fresh produce, protein and other staples to feed 100 families for a week. The food bank then takes those items to people sheltered in place.

It's almost like a war effort," Curado said. "You have to go, I'll go out and I'll get it for you, and I'll bring it back to you with that mentality."

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strict attorney's office that one person tried to vote despite not being a citizen. He is a Canadian citizen, a legal resident, and eligible in 2024 to run for office. He has no criminal record and no misdemeanor counts. He has not been convicted in the past. He was in the prison in 2016 for a minor offense. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison. He was in an informal probation program.

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A black and white photograph of a soldier in camouflage gear and a helmet, holding a rifle. The soldier is standing in a room with shelves in the background. The image is grainy and has a high-contrast, somewhat blurry quality.

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**U.S. MARINES** guard the downtown L.A. federal building while people, reflected, participate in a prayer walk for family unity on June 18.

Diana Crofts-Pelayo, a spokeswoman for Gov. Gavin Newsom, said in an email that the governor is "worried how this mission will impact the physical and emotional well-being of the soldiers de-

"Under President Trump's leadership military morale is sky high because our troops know they finally have a patriotic Commander-In-Chief who will always have their backs," Jackson wrote.

Their interactions with the public are far different from those earlier this year when Newsom deployed the National Guard to L.A. County to help with wildfire recovery efforts after the Eaton and Palisades fires.

California officials hav

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"I said, 'Wait, it's 2/3 they're sending in? The War Dogs? Releasing them on Los Angeles?' It was nuts for

"They haven't complained," she added. "Soldiers vote with their feet. We're mostly quiet professionals and take a lot of pride in our job. [But] you can only squeeze so much of a lemon before it is dry. You can only pound on the California Guardsmen without it affecting things like retention and recruiting."

# Medicaid patients can't pick provider, court says

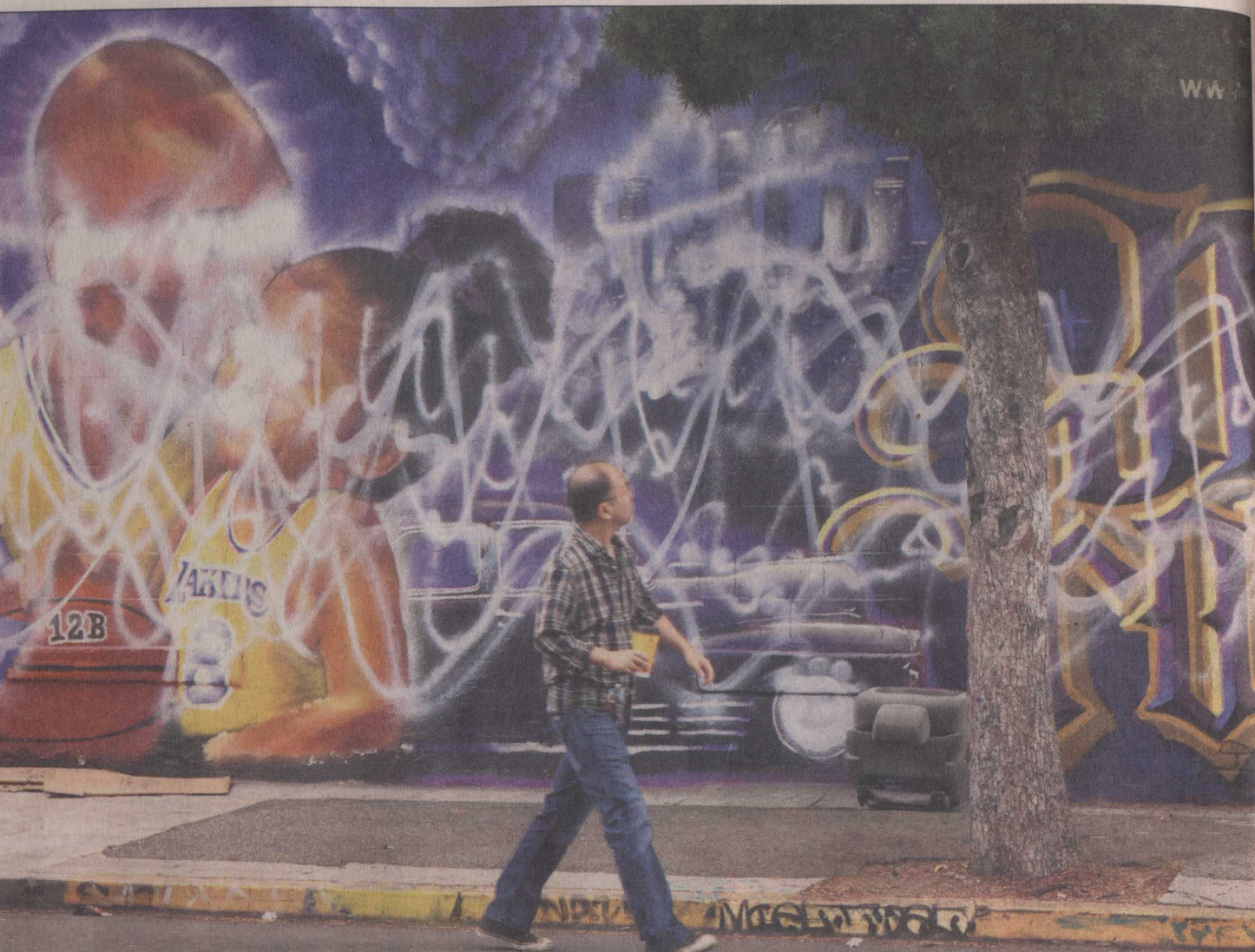
The court's three liberals, all women, dissented.

But the court agreed to hear the state's appeal in *Medina vs. Planned Parenthood*.

Carol Tobias, president of the National Right to Life



# of murals, Kobe tribute is tagged



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**MORIAL** to Kobe and Gigi Bryant in L.A. was vandalized twice. "There's just a lot of meaning at that wall," artist Sloe Motions said.

rs her business has oused on Main Street. ore, it was isolated to ated areas," she said. different breed of art- ow. They have no re- for business owners, ty owners. It's disre- ul. You have to call it it is, it's just disre-

e Motions is far from ly muralist to feel d.

ly Baca's famed mural male Olympic runner ved, even though it en hit by taggers in the hen in 2019, the mural t of the 1984 Olympics vement — was mys- ly whitewashed, ing outrage. Metro ually admitted one of affiti abatement con- rs had covered the and vowed to restore

ey would rather paint mural than see even a

mark of graffiti on the mural," Baca said at the time.

The latest vandalism to Bryant's mural felt like another blow to the area.

A post on June 3 from the DTLA Insider Instagram account summed up the situation simply: "We really can't have nice things."

The mural image is a spin on a photograph capturing a sweet moment during the 2008 NBA Finals when the Lakers legend — a proud "girl dad" — leans down and kisses the side of his smiling toddler's head as he cradles her in his arm during a news conference.

Sloe Motions was drawn to the emotion in the photograph — the purity of a father's love and a daughter's admiration for her hero. It was captured years before Gigi started playing basketball, showing off her own version of her dad's envied fade-away jumper.

Next to them, the words "Mambas Forever" with an infinity symbol are painted in purple and gold.

Bryant, 41, and 13-year-old Gigi, along with seven others — John Altobelli, 56; Keri Altobelli, 46; Alyssa Altobelli, 13; Christina Maurer, 38, Sarah Chester, 45; Payton Chester, 13; and pilot Ara Zobayan, 50 — died Jan. 26, 2020, when the helicopter Zobayan was flying crashed in the hills of Calabasas.

After the initial vandalism in late March, Sloe Motions had sought donations to help cover the cost of restoring the mural in the current location, hoping to preserve the spot for the Bryant family.

"There's just a lot of meaning at that wall," he said.

Lakers star Luka Dončić's foundation quickly jumped into action, donating \$5,000, the full amount

needed, to a fundraiser to help restore the art piece.

In late May, Sloe Motions posted on Instagram that the mural was finally finished. He'd added a few additional touches, painting the No. 8 on Gigi's jersey, an homage to the number that Kobe wore for the first 10 seasons of his career.

A week later, the new details were still visible but under the scrawl of white paint.

On June 4, television news cameras were positioned near the mural, and passersby stopped to assess the damage. A jumble of bright white paint cut across the image, and heavy white dots covered Kobe's and Gigi's eyes.

"This time, they really went heavy," Sergio Bautista, 35, said as he stood in front of the mural. "It's sad to see."

Sky Hendrix, who was in

the area filming a music video with a friend, expressed his disbelief.

"That's disrespecting the dead," Hendrix said as he took in the scene. "Who would do that? He's the GOAT and she's just a little girl."

Despite the vandalism, Sloe Motions showed no real sign of anger as he talked about the future of the art piece somewhere else where more people could view and appreciate it.

He said he sent "prayers" to the people who vandalized his work.

"Nothing's forever, and that's the beauty of this stuff," Sloe Motions said. "Some stuff could last a minute, some stuff could last a day, some stuff could last years."

Times photographer Genaro Molina contributed to this report.

Analysis finds a major boost in aquifers. Stormwater capture, other efforts are cited.

By IAN JAMES

A year of average precipitation gave California's groundwater supplies a significant boost, according to a state analysis released Tuesday.

California's aquifers gained an estimated 2.2 million acre-feet of groundwater in the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, the state's 2024 water year. That's about half the storage capacity of Shasta Lake, California's largest reservoir.

State officials said local agencies reported that about 1.9 million acre-feet of water went underground as a result of managed aquifer recharge projects designed to capture stormwater and replenish groundwater.

The boost to underground supplies occurred

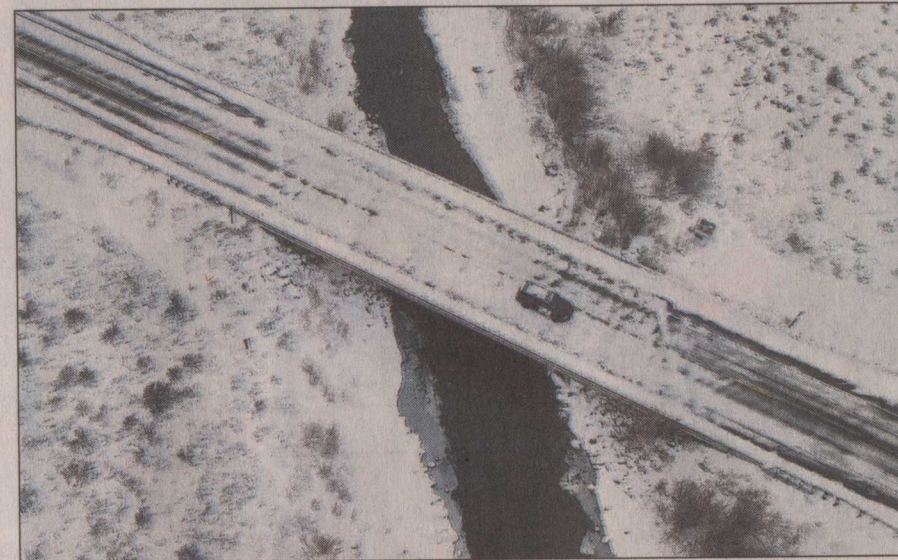
while the state is implementing water-saving programs and regulations intended to help curb chronic overpumping in farming areas in the Central Valley.

The amount of groundwater replenishment during the 2024 water year, while significant, was less than the 8.7 million acre-feet that percolated underground during the extremely wet 2023 water year, according to state estimates.

Even as California has sought to capture more stormwater to recharge groundwater, pumping to provide for agriculture has continued drawing on underground supplies.

The groundwater report, prepared by the state Department of Water Resources, said about 11.5 million acre-feet of groundwater was pumped across 98 basins, based on data from local agencies that submitted annual reports. That was up from 9.7 million reported the previous year.

The Central Valley accounted for more than 84% of groundwater extraction



TAYFUN COSKUN Anadolu

**SNOW COVERS** Highway 395 as a storm hits the Sierra Nevada in December.

statewide, and most of that water was used to supply the valley's farmlands.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said California is collecting more groundwater data than it has previously, and is continuing to prioritize efforts to recharge aquifers. He said, however, that the

state's water infrastructure is unprepared for the effects of climate change, and he reiterated his support for building a water tunnel beneath the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

"We're done with barriers," Newsom said in a statement. "We must modernize

our water infrastructure."

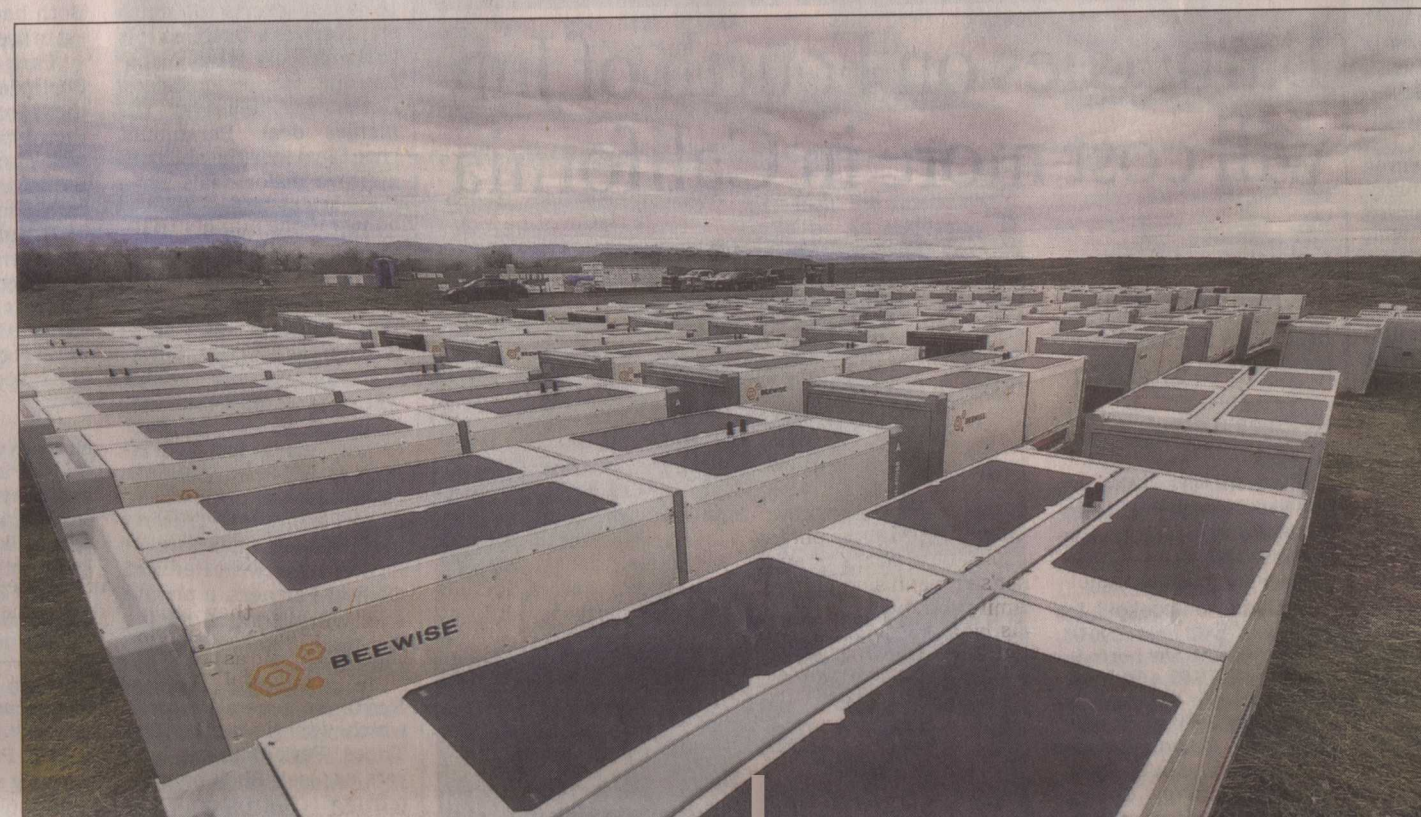
The proposed Delta Conveyance Project, with an estimated price tag of \$20.1 billion, has generated heated debate. Supporters say the proposed project is essential to modernizing the state's water infrastructure and maintaining the reliability of

supplies from the State Water Project. Opponents would unnecessarily harm the Delta's deteriorated ecosystem, threaten species and lead to significantly higher water costs for the public.

As they released the figures, officials said efforts to address groundwater overpumping have been helped by a state program called LandFlex, which has provided \$23.3 million in grants to local groundwater agencies, enabling dozens of small and midsize farms to take steps to bolster groundwater levels.

According to state estimates, the program helped save more than 100,000 acre-feet of groundwater by reducing pumping. The Department of Water Resources said the program has also helped in reducing floodwaters onto low-lying farmland to recharge groundwater.

Department Director Karla Nemeth called "climate-resilient solutions" for local water managers and agencies as well as farm-





ment to Orange County election officials, seeking information on people who had been removed from the county's voter rolls because they weren't eligible to vote. According to the lawsuit, federal officials were acting on a complaint made by the relative of a noncitizen who received a mail-in ballot.

Over a five-year period, Orange County identified 17 noncitizens who had registered to vote, Page told the federal agency in a June 16 letter, sent in response to the June 2 request. Those people either "self-reported" [See Noncitizens, A6]

Some Guardsmen and families are agonizing over the operations in L.A., advocates say.

BY HAILEY  
BRANSON-POTTS  
AND PHI DO

Ever since President Trump seized control of the California National Guard and deployed thousands of troops to Los Angeles, calls from distressed service members and their families have been pouring in to the GI Rights Hotline.



CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times

**A MARINE** stands guard outside the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles on Monday.

Some National Guard troops and their loved ones have called to say they were agonizing over the legality of the deployment, which is being litigated in federal court, according to Steve Woolford, a resource counselor for the hotline, which provides confidential counseling for service members.

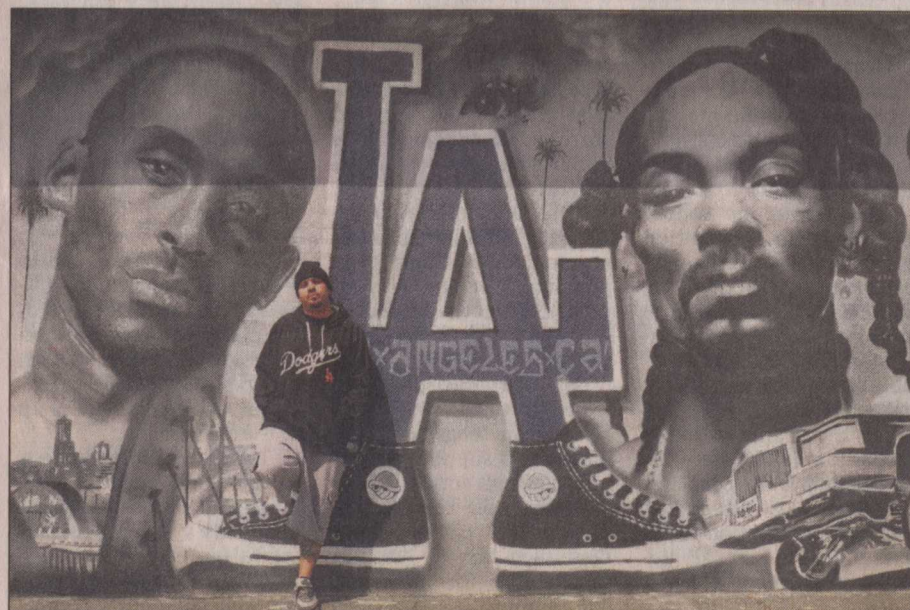
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"They don't want to deport their uncle or their wife [See Troops, A7]

ported 15 cases; Ohio and Illinois, 10, and Arkansas and Indiana, eight.

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There have been 17 cases [See Measles, A14]



CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

**ARTIST** Sloe Motions in front of his mural of Kobe Bryant, left, and Snoop Dogg.

## Graffiti mars Kobe tribute

Just days after being restored, a mural of the Lakers legend and his daughter Gianna was tagged again

BY HANNAH FRY  
AND NATHAN SOLIS

Weathered and bumpy, the wall hidden among the surplus clothing stores of the Fashion District was hardly the perfect canvas.

But artist Sloe Motions' vision for the memorial mural in honor of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna following their deaths in 2020 brought the stretch of Main and 14th streets to life with

vibrant hues of purple and gold.

One of the most well-known Kobe murals across Southern California, the art piece — outside Jimmy Jam T-Shirts — was the backdrop for a commercial for Super Bowl LVI featuring Vanessa Bryant and has drawn fans from near and far.

For years, the mural remained untouched — an unspoken mark of respect for the artist and the subject

but one that abruptly ended this year.

In late March, someone tagged the artwork with large bubble letters outlined in black and filled in with white — a similar style to other street tagging visible across the city.

Sloe Motions went back to work, painstakingly restoring the mural. There was much fanfare in downtown when the new mural made its debut in late May. But [See Kobe, A8]

## Justices rule Medicaid can exclude Planned Parenthood

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that states may exclude Planned Parenthood clinics from providing medical screenings and other healthcare for women on Medicaid.

The court's conservative majority cast aside the long-standing rule that said Medicaid patients may obtain medical care from any quali-

fied provider.

In a 6-3 vote, the justices ruled the Medicaid Act does not give patients an "individual right" to the provider of their choice.

The dispute turned on abortion, even though federal funds cannot be used for the procedure.

Medicaid is funded by the federal government and the states. For decades, conservative states have sought to "defund" Planned Parenthood and argued they did

not want to subsidize a leading provider of abortions.

But until recently, the federal government and most courts had held that Medicaid patients may go to any qualified provider for healthcare.

The legal battle hinged on whether the Medicaid Act gave patients a right that could be protected in court. The answer was no, said Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, speaking for the majority. [See Justices, A7]

### CalGuard crews at 40% capacity

Newsom says crucial firefighting units have been diverted to L.A. for federal immigration actions. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Price at the pump to rise in summer

California's sales tax on gasoline and the Low Carbon Fuel Standard program will take effect in July. **BUSINESS, A11**

### Weather

Mostly sunny.  
L.A. Basin: 83/62. **B6**



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

### FEAR FOR FEAR'S SAKE

A tenuous ceasefire between Iran and Israel is allowing President Trump to exploit Americans' anxiety, Anita Chabria writes. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**



# In a city of murals, Kobe tribute is tagged

[Kobe, from A1]  
within a few days, it was again defaced. The artist is disappointed but vows to restore it once again — this time in a new location.

"This one has a lot of meaning to it, so it hurts me that people would do something like this where they're disrespecting the Bryant family. It just exposes these people's demons," Sloe Motions said.

Residents of downtown are used to tags as part of the landscape. This is, after all, the place where taggers coated the unfinished Oceanwide Plaza high-rise complex with graffiti, generating international attention and debate about the line between art and vandalism.

But the treatment of the Kobe tribute surprised Sloe Motions.

"This isn't just another Kobe mural. It's a memorial," he said.

Street art has long been a part of the culture of Los Angeles, where murals — sanctioned and unsanctioned — and graffiti harmoniously share canvas space. Some abide by the unwritten code that you don't cover someone else's art. Others take a more autonomous approach, creating what they want where they want.

"Great cities have great public art," said Wyland, a Laguna Beach-based artist who has painted murals across the world. "This Kobe mural, it's become part of the fabric of Los Angeles. And for someone to come in and destroy it like that doesn't make any sense."

Los Angeles is known as a city of murals — some of which remain respectfully untouched for years, while others like the Kobe memorial are a seemingly irresistible target for taggers. There was a time when some property owners believed hiring the right muralist to grace your walls — or including a portrait of the Virgen de Guadalupe — could keep taggers away. But not anymore.

In many ways downtown Los Angeles is the perfect gallery for viewing street art, turning nondescript buildings into colorful canvases that tell the story of the region.

If Ewing, co-owner of Jimmy Jam T-Shirts, says street art has changed in the



A MEMORIAL to Kobe and Gigi Bryant in L.A. was vandalized twice. "There's just a lot of meaning at that wall," artist Sloe Motions said.

13 years her business has been housed on Main Street.

"Before, it was isolated to designated areas," she said. "It's a different breed of artists now. They have no respect for business owners, property owners. It's disrespectful. You have to call it what it is, it's just disrespect."

Sloe Motions is far from the only muralist to feel burned.

Judy Baca's famed mural of a female Olympic runner is beloved, even though it has been hit by taggers in the past. Then in 2019, the mural — part of the 1984 Olympics art movement — was mysteriously whitewashed, sparking outrage. Metro eventually admitted one of its graffiti abatement contractors had covered the mural and vowed to restore it.

"They would rather paint on the mural than see even a

mark of graffiti on the mural," Baca said at the time.

The latest vandalism to Bryant's mural felt like another blow to the area.

A post on June 3 from the DTLA Insider Instagram account summed up the situation simply: "We really can't have nice things."

The mural image is a spin on a photograph capturing a sweet moment during the 2008 NBA Finals when the Lakers legend — a proud "girl dad" — leans down and kisses the side of his smiling toddler's head as he cradles her in his arm during a news conference.

Sloe Motions was drawn to the emotion in the photograph — the purity of a father's love and a daughter's admiration for her hero. It was captured years before Gigi started playing basketball, showing off her own version of her dad's envied fade-away jumper.

Next to them, the words "Mambas Forever" with an infinity symbol are painted in purple and gold.

Bryant, 41, and 13-year-old Gigi, along with seven others — John Altobelli, 56; Keri Altobelli, 46; Alyssa Altobelli, 13; Christina Mau-ser, 38, Sarah Chester, 45; Payton Chester, 13; and pilot Ara Zobayan, 50 — died Jan. 26, 2020, when the helicopter Zobayan was flying crashed in the hills of Calabasas.

After the initial vandalism in late March, Sloe Motions had sought donations to help cover the cost of restoring the mural in the current location, hoping to preserve the spot for the Bryant family.

"There's just a lot of meaning at that wall," he said.

Lakers star Luka Don-cic's foundation quickly jumped into action, donating \$5,000, the full amount

needed, to a fundraiser to help restore the art piece.

In late May, Sloe Motions posted on Instagram that the mural was finally finished. He'd added a few additional touches, painting the No. 8 on Gigi's jersey, an homage to the number that Kobe wore for the first 10 seasons of his career.

A week later, the new details were still visible but under the scrawl of white paint.

On June 4, television news cameras were positioned near the mural, and passersby stopped to assess the damage. A jumble of bright white paint cut across the image, and heavy white dots covered Kobe's and Gigi's eyes.

"This time, they really went heavy," Sergio Bautista, 35, said as he stood in front of the mural. "It's sad to see."

Sky Hendrix, who was in

the area filming a music video with a friend, expressed his disbelief.

"That's disrespecting the dead," Hendrix said as he took in the scene. "Who would do that? He's the GOAT and she's just a little girl."

Despite the vandalism, Sloe Motions showed no real sign of anger as he talked about the future of the art piece somewhere else where more people could view and appreciate it.

He said he sent "prayers" to the people who vandalized his work.

"Nothing's forever, and that's the beauty of this stuff," Sloe Motions said. "Some stuff could last a minute, some stuff could last a day, some stuff could last years."

Times photographer Genaro Molina contributed to this report.

Analysis finds a major boost in aquifers. Stormwater capture, other efforts are cited.

By IAN JAMES

A year of average precipitation gave California's groundwater supplies a significant boost, according to a state analysis released Tuesday.

California's aquifers gained an estimated 2.2 million acre-feet of groundwater in the 12 months that ended Sept. 30, the state's 2024 water year. That's about half the storage capacity of Shasta Lake, California's largest reservoir.

State officials said local agencies reported that about 1.9 million acre-feet of water went underground as a result of managed aquifer recharge projects designed to capture stormwater and replenish groundwater.

The boost to underground supplies occurred

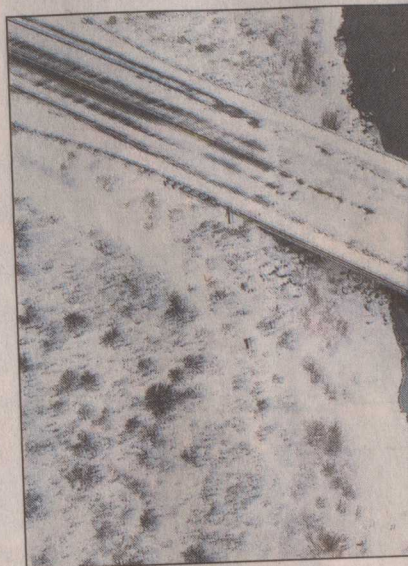
while the state is implementing water-saving programs and regulations intended to help curb chronic overpumping in farming areas in the Central Valley.

The amount of groundwater replenishment during the 2024 water year, while significant, was less than the 8.7 million acre-feet that percolated underground during the extremely wet 2023 water year, according to state estimates.

Even as California has sought to capture more stormwater to recharge groundwater, pumping to provide for agriculture has continued drawing on underground supplies.

The groundwater report, prepared by the state Department of Water Resources, said about 11.5 million acre-feet of groundwater was pumped across 98 basins, based on data from local agencies that submitted annual reports. That was up from 9.7 million reported the previous year.

The Central Valley accounted for more than 84% of groundwater extraction



SNOW COVERS Highway 395 as a

statewide, and most of that water was used to supply the valley's farmlands.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said California is collecting more groundwater data than it has previously, and is continuing to prioritize efforts to recharge aquifers. He said, however, that the

